

SAFETY NEWS

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PANDEMICS...WHAT ARE THEY AND HOW CAN THEY AFFECT US?

We've all seen and heard this term in the news lately, but exactly what is a pandemic and what are the chances of us experiencing one?

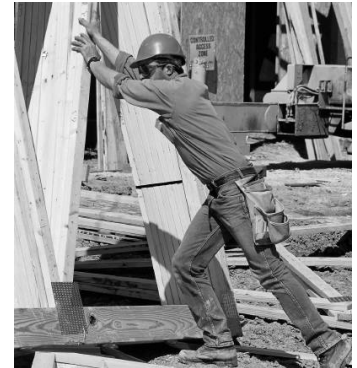
An influenza pandemic is a global outbreak of disease that occurs when a new influenza A virus appears or "emerges" in the human population, causes serious illness, and then spreads easily from person to person worldwide. Pandemics are different from seasonal outbreaks or "epidemics" of influenza. Seasonal outbreaks are caused by subtypes of influenza viruses that already circulate among people, whereas pandemic outbreaks are caused by new subtypes, by subtypes that have never circulated among people, or by subtypes that have not circulated among people for a long time. Past influenza pandemics have led to high levels of illness, death, social disruption, and economic loss.

There are many different subtypes of influenza or "flu" viruses. Pandemic viruses emerge as a result of a process called "antigenic shift," which causes an abrupt or sudden, major change in influenza A viruses. The appearance of a new influenza A virus subtype is the first step toward a pandemic; the second step is the virus' spread from person to person. Once it emerges and spreads, it usually becomes established among people and moves around or "circulates" for many years as seasonal epidemics of influenza. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have large surveillance programs to monitor and detect influenza activity around the world, including the emergence of possible pandemic strains of influenza virus.

A vaccine probably would not be available in the early stages of a pandemic. When a new vaccine against an influenza virus is being developed, scientists around the world work together to select the virus strain that will offer the best protection against that virus. Manufacturers then use the selected strain to develop a vaccine. Once a potential pandemic strain of influenza virus is identified, it takes several months before a vaccine will be widely available. If a pandemic occurs, the U.S. government will work with many partner groups to make recommendations guiding the early use of available vaccine.

Previous 20th century pandemics included the "Spanish flu" in 1918-19, which caused more than 500,000 deaths in the U.S.; the "Asian flu" in 1957-58, which caused about 70,000 U.S. deaths; and the "Hong Kong flu" in 1968-69, which caused 34,000 Americans to die. Many scientists believe it is only a matter of time until the next influenza pandemic occurs. The severity of the next pandemic cannot be predicted, but modeling studies suggest that the impact of a pandemic on the United States could be substantial.

In the absence of any control measures such as vaccinations or drugs, it has been estimated that in the U.S. a "medium-level" pandemic could cause
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OSHA OFFERS CONSTRUCTION COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recently debuted a new Construction Module for its Compliance Assistance Quick Start Web tool. The agency's Web-based tool introduces employers and employees, especially those at new or small businesses, to the compliance assistance resources on OSHA's Web site.

The Construction Module provides a step-by-step guide to help employers and workers in the construction industry comply with OSHA's construction standards. Visitors to the page can generate a set of compliance assistance materials tailored to their jobsites.

The Construction Module introduces users to the OSHA standards addressing the leading hazards at construction sites, such as falls and electrical hazards, and provides links to the relevant
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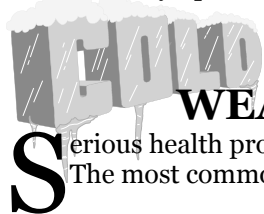
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89,000 to 207,000 deaths, 314,000 to 734,000 hospitalizations, 18 to 42 million outpatient visits, and another 20 to 47 million people being sick. Between 15% and 35% of our population could be affected by an influenza pandemic, and the economic impact could range between \$71.3 and \$166.5 billion.

While there is not a human influenza pandemic at this time, nor can it be said that one is imminent, it is important to plan preparedness activities that will permit a prompt and effective public health response. A new strain of influenza virus (H5N1) has been found in birds in Asia, and it has been shown that this virus can infect humans. If the virus mutates in certain ways, it is possible that it could lead to a pandemic.

Because of the expected size of an influenza pandemic, businesses will play a key role in protecting employees' health and safety, as well as limiting the negative impact to the economy and society. Therefore, they need to plan NOW. Companies that provide critical infrastructure services, such as power and telecommunications, also have a special responsibility to plan for continued operation in a crisis. As with any catastrophe, having a contingency plan is essential.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have developed a checklist to aid large businesses in planning for a possible pandemic. The checklist identifies important, specific activities large businesses can do now to prepare, many of which will also help in other emergencies as well. To access a copy of the checklist as well as ongoing informational updates in both preparing for and reacting to the possible onset of a pandemic, please refer to the Federal Government's pandemic-related website: www.pandemicflu.gov. This site will be continually updated with the latest information.



WEATHER ADVISORY IN EFFECT

Serious health problems can result from prolonged exposure to the cold. The most common cold-related problems are hypothermia and frostbite.

HYPOTHERMIA - What Happens to the Body:

Normal body temperature (98.6°F/37°C) drops to or below 95°F; fatigue or drowsiness; uncontrolled shivering; cool, bluish skin; slurred speech; clumsy movements; irritable, irrational or confused behavior.

FROSTBITE - What Happens to the Body:

Freezing in deep layers of skin and tissue; pale, waxy-white skin color; skin becomes hard and numb; usually affects the fingers, hands, toes, feet, ears, and nose.

How to Protect Workers

- ❖ Recognize the environmental and workplace conditions that lead to potential cold-induced illnesses and injuries.
- ❖ Learn the signs and symptoms of cold-induced illnesses/injuries and what to do to help the worker.
- ❖ Train the workforce about cold-induced illnesses and injuries.
- ❖ Select proper clothing for cold, wet, and windy conditions. Layer clothing to adjust to changing environmental temperatures. Wear a hat and gloves, in addition to underwear that will keep water away from the skin (polypropylene).
- ❖ Take frequent short breaks in warm dry shelters to warm up.
- ❖ Perform work during the warmest part of the day.
- ❖ Avoid exhaustion or fatigue because energy is needed to keep muscles warm.
- ❖ Use the buddy system (work in pairs).

- ❖ Drink warm, sweet beverages (sugar water, sports-type drinks). Avoid drinks with caffeine (coffee, tea, or hot chocolate) or alcohol.
- ❖ Eat warm, high-calorie foods like hot pasta dishes.

Workers Are At Increased Risk When...

- ❖ They have predisposing health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and hypertension.
- ❖ They take certain medication (check with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacy and ask if any medicines you are taking affect you while working in cold environments).
- ❖ They are in poor physical condition, have a poor diet, or are older.

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OSHA compliance assistance resources, including OSHA quick cards, fact sheets, booklets, posters and Web pages. The Module also includes information on training, recordkeeping and developing a worksite safety and health program. In addition, it features a collection of OSHA's Spanish-language materials for the construction industry.

Compliance Assistance Quick Start is on OSHA's Compliance Assistance Web page and provides step-by-step guidance on how to identify OSHA requirements and guidance materials that may apply to specific workplaces. In addition to the new Construction Module, Compliance Assistance Quick Start has modules for general industry workplaces and Hispanic outreach.

Employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthful workplace for their employees. OSHA's role is to assure the safety and health of America's workers by setting and enforcing standards; providing training, outreach, and education; establishing partnerships; and encouraging continual process improvement in workplace safety and health. For more information, visit www.osha.gov

AGENCY GEARS UP FOR 2006 TRAINING CLASSES



While most of us have been out buying Christmas gifts and preparing for the holidays, trainers at the Arkansas

Department of Labor's Safety Division have been looking at their schedules, and combing state maps, checking on facilities and negotiating prices, and discussing safety and health needs and potential topics. Addressing the state's training needs is something they put a great deal of time and preparation into each year at this time, and the following are their tentative dates and locations for 2006 training seminars and classes.

PREVENTING OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES AND ILLNESSES SEMINARS

(One-day seminars for private sector employees held across the state dealing with such topics as Effective Safety Teams, Hazard Recognition, Confined Spaces, Teen Safety, Stress and Violence in the Workplace, People Based Safety, OSHA Update and more. Contact Judy Harwell at 682-9092 to receive additional information.)

Pine Bluff – Mar. 23	Bentonville – Aug 10
Little Rock – Apr.	Texarkana – Aug. 17
Fort Smith – To be announced	Batesville – Sept. 14
Hope – To be announced	Jonesboro – Sept. 27
Russellville – May 18	Monticello – Oct. 4
El Dorado – Jun.	Crossett – Oct. 23
West Memphis – Jun.	

PREVENTING OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES AND ILLNESSES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

(Half-day and one-day seminars for public sector employees held across the state dealing with such topics as Hazard Recognition, Chemical Right to Know, Electrical Hazards, Confined Spaces, Lockout/Tagout, Excavations, Boom Truck Safety, and more. Call Richard Steward at 682-4521 for info.)

Dermott – Feb.
Hot Springs – Mar. 29-30
West Memphis – Apr.
McGehee – May 4
Jonesboro – May 25
Mena – Jun.
Fort Smith – Sept.
Hope – Sept.
North Little Rock – Oct.

BLASTING TRAINING CLASSES

(Required safety training for all individuals performing blasting in the state. For more information, call Bob Cook at (479) 754-9177)

40 HOUR CLASS

Little Rock – Feb. 13-17
Fort Smith – Jun. 12-16

20 HOUR CLASS

Little Rock – Mar. 14-16
Fort Smith – Apr. 11-13
Little Rock – May 16-18
Fort Smith – Jul. 11-13

8 HOUR REFRESHER CLASS

Little Rock – Feb. 22
Fort Smith – Mar. 1
Little Rock – Apr. 5
Fort Smith – May 3
Little Rock – Jun. 7
Fort Smith – Jul. 5
Little Rock – Oct. 25
Fort Smith – Nov. 1

Please keep in mind that dates are tentative on some classes, registration fees range from \$10 to \$50 depending on the class, and pre-registration is always required.

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JEANETTE DONAHUE, EDITOR

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DON'T LET THE SILENT KILLER GET YOU THIS YEAR!



With the onset of cold weather in Arkansas, it never fails that we see at least one article in the paper of someone who has died from carbon monoxide poisoning due to a faulty heater. Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, toxic gas which interferes with the oxygen-carrying capacity of blood. Carbon monoxide is non-irritating and can overcome persons without warning.

Common causes of CO poisoning are using gasoline powered tools and generators, compressors, concrete cutting saws, welders, power trowels, floor buffers, or space heaters and stoves in buildings, or semi-enclosed spaces without adequate ventilation.

The symptoms of CO exposure are headaches, dizziness and drowsiness; nausea, vomiting, and tightness across the chest. Severe CO poisoning causes neurological damage, illness, and coma, as well as death.

To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning from happening in your home or place of business:

- Never use a generator indoors or in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces such as garages, crawl spaces, and basements. Opening windows and doors in an enclosed space may prevent CO buildup.
- Make sure the generator has 3-4 feet of clear space on all sides and above it to ensure adequate ventilation.
- Do not use a generator outdoors if placed near doors, windows or vents which could allow CO to enter and build up in occupied spaces.
- When using space heaters and stoves ensure that they are in good working order to reduce CO buildup, and never use in enclosed spaces or indoors.
- Consider using tools powered by electricity or compressed air, if available.
- If you experience symptoms of CO poisoning, get to fresh air right away and seek immediate medical attention.